

STATEMENT OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC COALITION FOR EAST TIMOR (APCET) ON THE LIQUICA MASSACRE

The East Timor nation is about to be born. But it is going through terrible and very painful labor pains.

More than 40 East Timorese seeking shelter inside a church in Liquica have been reported to be mercilessly and literally cut down by a barbarous gang of paramilitaries obviously backed by the Indonesian military, ABRI who not only stood by, but encourage the carnage while it was going on. A priest was among those murdered. The eminent and Nobel laureate Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo has himself counted 25 bodies while there are other reports that at least 6 military vehicles transported the dead and mangled bodies. The bishop has expressed sadness and dismay over this latest slaughter.

Responding to this atrocity, the East Timorese leader Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao has called upon his people to defend themselves by all means including a resort to general insurrection to check the massacre of their incipient nation.

Rightly so.

The East Timorese people and their leaders have gone to great lengths to afford Indonesia the conditions for a graceful exit from their abominable occupation of their country. The East Timorese, despite being the victims of their illegal presence and control of their territory, have repeatedly spurned the seduction to confront violence with the same. The Falintil army has been holding back since negotiations at the United Nations and even on the ground have shifted into high gear after the fall of the dictator Suharto.

But diplomacy was not working. And more lives have again been lost. And will continue to be lost if the East Timorese people allow this to go unencumbered. There is a limit to the patience of a people. There is a threshold to accommodations that can be made by their leaders.

APCET condemns this massacre in Liquica and holds the Indonesian government responsible and accountable for this latest sin in their litany of transgressions against the East Timorese people.

APCET strongly supports the justified call of Xanana Gusmao on his people to defend themselves and resort to an uprising against these unprovoked attacks.

APCET calls on the international community and the United Nations and governments in particular to likewise condemn the massacre and pressure the Indonesian government to stop their violence and withdraw ABRI from the territory to calm the environment and get the peace process back on track.

The Liquica bloodbath was happening as East Timorese technicians, professionals and experts both from inside East Timor and the *diaspora* have been meeting in Melbourne since early this week evolving a development framework for their nation.

~~They~~ They have been working very hard culling, extracting, consolidating the cream and talent of their people in ~~their~~ homestretch to freedom.

The Indonesian army's latest assault is but a sorry and desperate reflection of an agonizing, last gasp of a dying order.

East Timor will be free. East Timor will be born.

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